

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CPR-02 SSC-01 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /053 W
-----065776 081335Z /45

O R 081215Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4080
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
DIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
COMSIXTHFLT
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 12564

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: ALESSANDRO PERTINI (SOCIALIST) ELECTED PRESIDENT OF ITALY

REF: ROME 12496 (NOTAL)

1. WITH THE 16TH BALLOT ON JULY 8 ALESSANDRO PERTINI, 82 YEAR OLD
SOCIALIST (PSI) DEPUTY, WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF ITALY. HE
RECEIVED AN UNPRECEDENTED 82.2 PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTES,
WHICH COVERED THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM FROM THE FAR LEFT TO THE
CONSERVATIVE LIBERALS. THE IMPASSE (REFTEL) OF THURSDAY NIGHT WAS
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BROKEN DURING THE DAY ON FRIDAY BY THE DC LEADERSHIP'S DECISION
TO SUPPORT PERTINI, A CANDIDATE THAT IT HAD EARLIER VETOED.
PERTINI WILL BE SWORN IN ON JULY . HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO
AVOID DISTURBING THE PRESENT POLITICAL FORMULA, AT LEAST FOR THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

2. THE CHOICE OF PERTINI APPEARS TO BE THE LOWEST COMMON

DENOMINATOR. THE UNPRODUCTIVE MEETING OF THE SIX PARTY SECRETARIES ON THURSDAY EVENING (REFTEL) EXACERBATED TEMPERS, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN THE PRI AND PSI, AND CONCLUDED WITH ONLY TWO CANDIDATES STILL AFLOAT, THE PRI'S LA MALFA AND THE PSI'S GIOLITTI. THE DC, HAVING CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET AGREEMENT ON A DC CANDIDATE, WAS THUS FACED WITH THE UNHAPPY CHOICE OF ALIENATING EITHER THE PRI OR THE PSI, OR OF FINDING ANOTHER CANDIDATE ON WHOM ALL COULD AGREE. THE CHOICE OF PERTINI, IN LIGHT OF THE DC'S EARLIER VETO, WAS RATIONALIZED BY THE DC LEADERSHIP AS FOLLOWS: THE DC HAD EARLIER OBJECTED TO PERTINI BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN PRESENTED AS THE CANDIDATE OF A LEFT FRONT, AND PERTINI HAD IN FACT WITHDRAWN HIS CANDIDACY STATING THAT HE WOULD NOT BE THE CANDIDATE OF ANY PARTICULAR GROUP AND WOULD ONLY ACCEPT ELECTION AS THE CHOICE OF A LARGE MAJORITY COVERING MOST OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. WITH THE DC ADVANCING HIS CANDIDACY, AND THE LEFT ALREADY COMMITTED, THE LARGE MAJORITY WAS ASSURED.

3. WITHIN THE DC, THE LEADERSHIP'S PROPOSAL YESTERDAY TO SUPPORT PERTINI WAS OPPOSED BY THE RIGHT WING OF THE PARTY (THE FOLLOWERS OF FANFANI AND DONAT CATTIN, AND THE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS AMONG THE FIRST TERM DEPUTIES -- SEGNI, BECAUSE THEY CONSIDERED PERTINI THE CANDIDATE OF THE PCI. ROSSI DE MONTELERA, ETC.) AT THE SAME TIME IT IS CLEAR THAT GIOLITTI, AND NOT PERTINI, WAS THE PSI LEADERSHIP'S PREFERRED CANDIDATE. THUS, MOST OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS WERE VICTORS, BUT THE VICTORIES WERE NOT COMPLETE. PERTINI'S ELECTION CAME AS A RESULT
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OF AN INITIATIVE OF THE DC, BUT CLEARLY WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM OF MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE DC. THE PRI AND PSDI SAW A LAY CANDIDATE ELECTED, AS THEY PREFERRED, BUT NOT ONE OF THEIRS. THE PSI HAS ACHIEVED ITS ANNOUNCED GOAL OF HAVING A SOCIALIST PRESIDENT, BUT PERTINI WAS NOT CRAXI'S FIRST CHOICE. PERTINI IS NOT CLOSE TO THE PSI LEADERSHIP AND, INDEED, OWES HIS ELECTION MORE TO THE DC AND THE PCI THAN TO THE PSI. THE MAJOR QUESTION MARK IN ALL OF THIS IS THE PCI. THAT PARTY HAS SUPPORTED PERTINI WITH ENTHUSIASM FROM THE BEGINNING. FURTHER, PERTINI HAS IN HIS LONG CAREER HAD CLOSE AND AMIABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PCI. SINCE HE HAS BEEN IN SEMI-RETIREMENT IN RECENT YEARS, HIS VIEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES ARE NOT KNOWN

HOWEVER, THE PATTERN OF HIS POLITICAL CAREER IS SUCH THAT HE IS LIKELY TO BE LESS WARY OF THE PCI THAN WE WOULD LIKE.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT A CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER BE SENT PROMPTLY.

5. BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON PERTINI BY IMMEDIATE SEPTTEL. GARDNER

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, ELECTION RESULTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME12564
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780280-0970
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780783/aaaacrpk.tel
Line Count: 113
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f53b6479-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ROME 12496
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2079232
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALESSANDRO PERTINI (SOCIALIST) ELECTED PRESIDENT OF ITALY
TAGS: PINT, IT, (PERTINI, ALESSANDRO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f53b6479-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014